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Thirty-First Report

COMMUNIST VIOLATIONS OF THE VIETNAM AND LAOS SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT AND RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

(This report covers the period from
19 September through 25 September 1973)

*This memorandum has been prepared jointly by the
Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense.*

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26 September 1973

Thirty-First Report

COMMUNIST VIOLATIONS OF THE VIETNAM AND LAOS
SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS AND RELATED DEVELOPMENTS*

(This report covers the week from
19 September through 25 September 1973)

The Key Points

- With the onset of the dry season, North Vietnamese infiltration of combat troops to the south has resumed on a substantial scale. Information received during the week has led to an increase in our estimate of total North Vietnamese infiltration to the south since 27 January from 57,000 men to more than 63,000 men.
- The North Vietnamese are continuing their preparations to resume the large scale use of the Ho Chi Minh trail in southern Laos during the coming dry season.
- Recent evidence indicates that the North Vietnamese are planning to augment their logistic capabilities in northern South Vietnam by expanding their port facilities in the Dong Ha/Cua Viet area of Quang Tri Province.
- Although combat activity was generally low in both South Vietnam and Laos, Communist forces in a sizable offensive operation overran an ARVN ranger camp west of Pleiku during the week.

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The Details

NOTE: This is the thirty-first in a series of memoranda summarizing evidence received during the reporting period of (I) Communist efforts to infiltrate new manpower and military materiel toward and into South Vietnam, (II) Communist-initiated combat activity in violation of the Vietnam and Laos settlement agreements, and (III) other developments affecting Communist military capabilities in Indochina. As with previous issues, we have prepared sections I and II of this memorandum in sterilized form in order to minimize the risk of source exposure if parts of the memorandum are used outside U.S. Government channels. For U.S. eyes only, we have appended a listing of specific sources to sections I and II at ANNEX A. Section III of the report has not been sterilized. Its contents should be held within the U.S. Government, and within the proper channels for material so classified.

I. Infiltration and Redeployments of North Vietnamese Personnel and Military Supplies

A. Personnel Infiltration and Redeployments

1. North Vietnamese combat infiltration to the southern war zones has resumed on a substantial scale now that the dry season is about to begin again in much of Indochina. During the past week, four new regular combat groups were reported entering the infiltration pipeline in North Vietnam, substantiating earlier evidence that the southward movement of troops was to start again. Two of these groups are destined for the northern half of South Vietnam while the other two are traveling to southern Laos. The last regular combat group detected starting its trip south left North Vietnam in mid-July. In addition to these southward-moving groups, one regular combat group was identified entering the pipeline in North Vietnam apparently destined for northern Laos.

2. Three other southward-moving combat groups were also detected for the first time during the week, but all of these were noted farther south in

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South Vietnam

Regular Combat Forces


<i>VC/NVA</i> ¹	<i>RVNAF</i> ²	<i>VC/NVA</i>	<i>RVNAF</i>
180,000	320,000	86,000	89,000
		325th	VNMC
		324B	Airborne
		320B	1st
		304th	2nd
		711th	3rd
		2nd	Regional

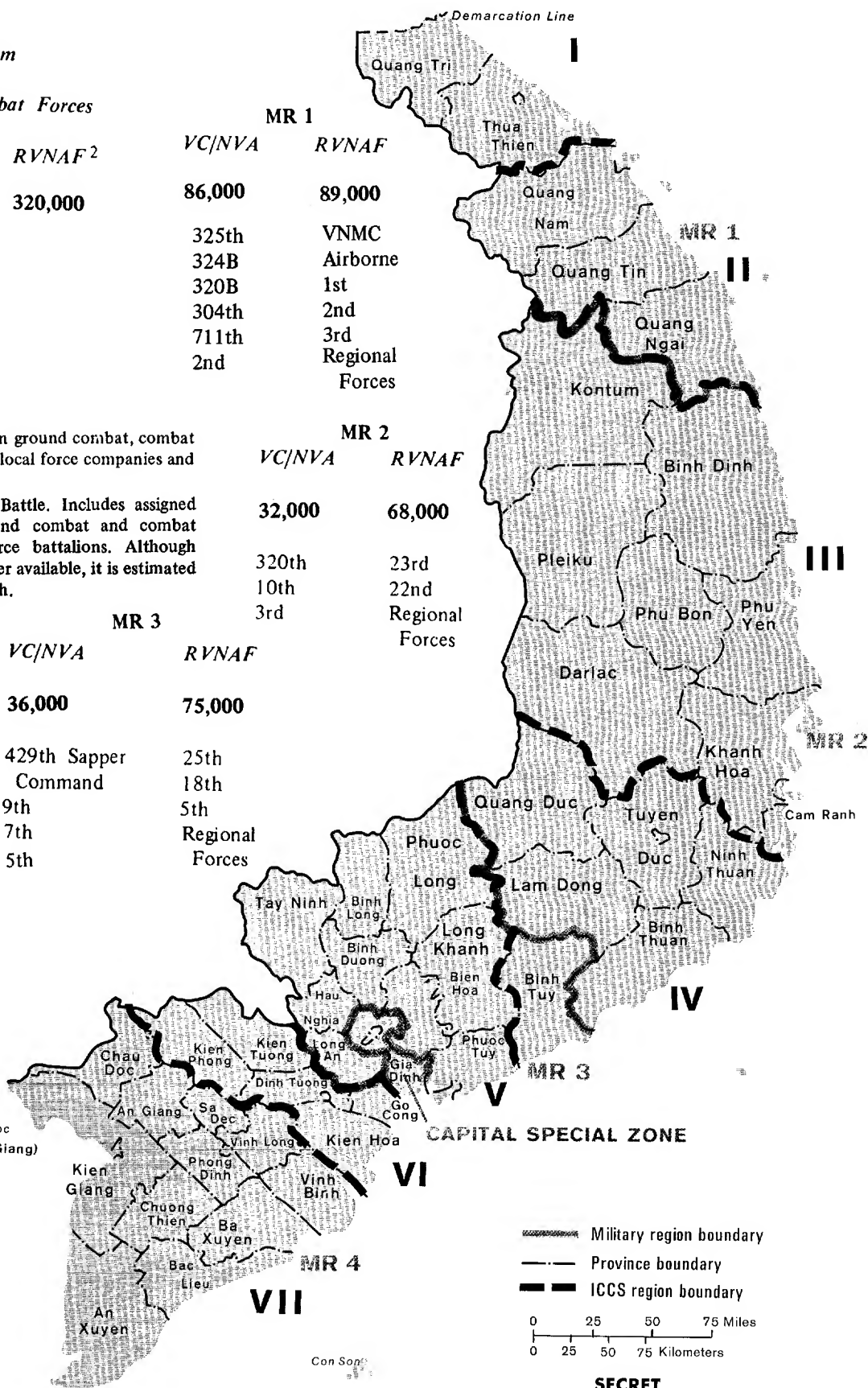
1. Includes VC/NVA personnel in ground combat, combat support, and air defense units and local force companies and platoons.

2. RVNAF Ground Order of Battle. Includes assigned personnel in ARVN/VNMC ground combat and combat support units, and Regional Force battalions. Although present for duty strength is no longer available, it is estimated to be about 85% of assigned strength.

	MR 2	
	<i>VC/NVA</i>	<i>RVNAF</i>
in ground combat, combat		
local force companies and		
Battle. Includes assigned	32,000	68,000
and combat and combat		
force battalions. Although		
er available, it is estimated	320th	23rd
h.	10th	22nd
	3rd	Regional
MR 3		Forces

MR 3	
<i>VC/NVA</i>	<i>RVNAF</i>
36,000	75,000
429th Sapper Command	25th 18th
9th	5th
7th	Regional
5th	Forces

MR 4	
VC/NVA	RVNAF
26,000	88,000
1st	 21st 9th 7th 44th Special Tactical Zone Regional Forces



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the infiltration pipeline. Two of these groups are moving toward the central coast of South Vietnam, while the third is destined for southern Laos. One special-purpose group--traveling to northern MR-1--also was initially noted starting south from North Vietnam during the past week.

3. As a result of the new information received during the past week, we have increased our estimate of total North Vietnamese infiltration to the south by more than 6,000 men. We now estimate that over 13,000 North Vietnamese personnel have entered the infiltration pipeline since the 15 June "second" ceasefire. Nearly 12,000 of these have been combat troops. Since the signing of the original ceasefire agreement on 27 January, more than 63,000 North Vietnamese combat troops and specialists have moved south through the infiltration system. Of these, over 38,000 have started south since the ceasefire, while the remaining 25,000 were in the pipeline moving southward as of that date. (ANNEX B, for U.S. eyes only, contains a more detailed discussion of the information pertaining to infiltration which was received during the past week.)

4. In southern Laos, two new NVA regiments--the 99th and 171st--have recently been identified which probably are involved in the dry season preparations currently underway there. Since it is not clear whether these regiments are combat or administrative services units, or whether they have recently infiltrated or have been created from existing units in the Laos Panhandle, we will await additional information before adding them to our order-of-battle estimates. Evidence received during the week also indicates that the NVA 49th Infantry Regiment has been redesignated as a communications regiment. The conversion of this combat regiment to an administrative services regiment apparently occurred last June or July, and the conversion probably reflects the Communists' desire to centralize and improve their communications efforts in southern Laos for the 1973/74 dry season.

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B. Movement of Military Equipment and SuppliesNorth Vietnam

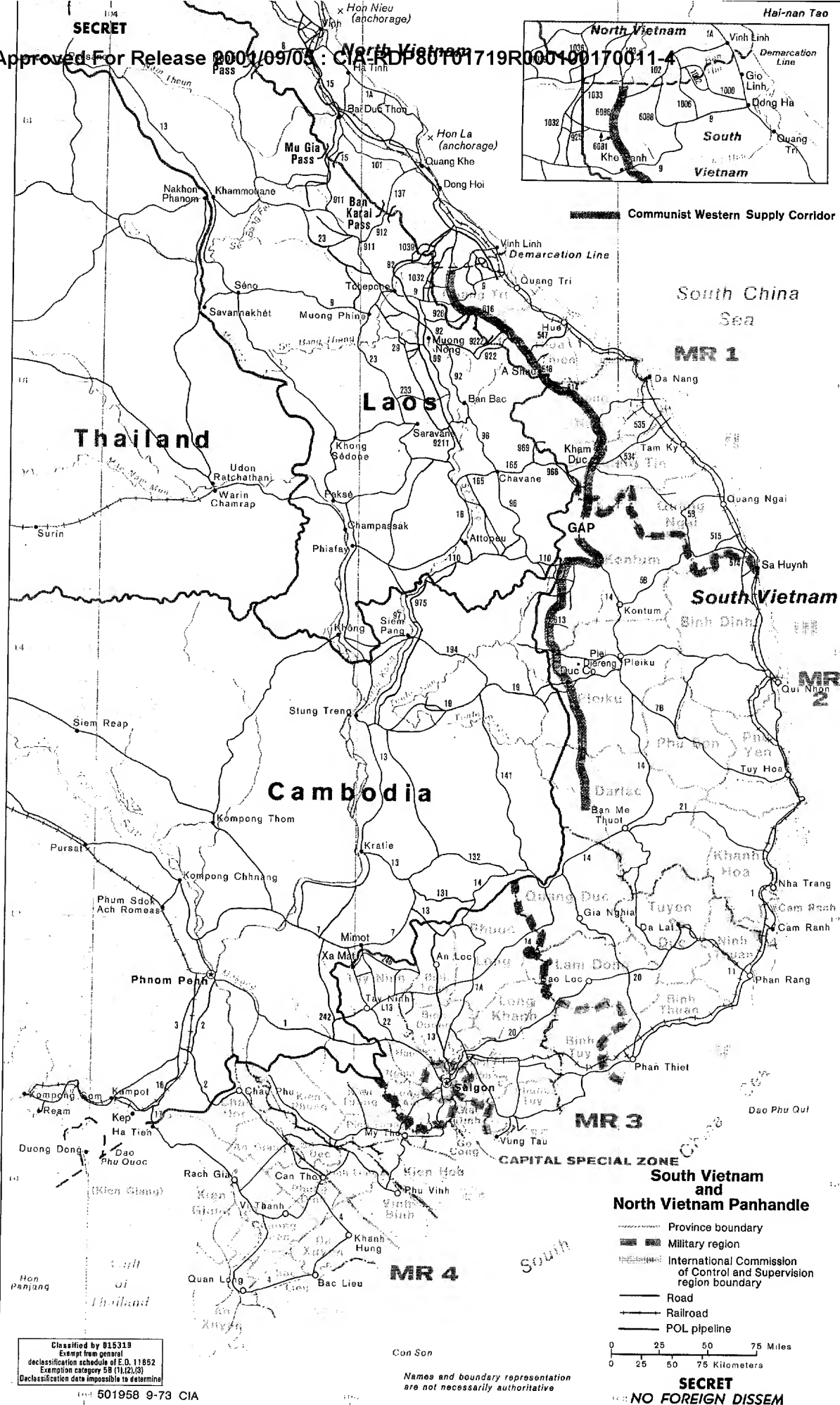
5. Wet weather again prevailed over much of the North Vietnamese Panhandle during the reporting period, but did not appear to disrupt the flow of supplies seriously. Between 16 and 20 September at least 125 NVA vehicles transported supplies to the Vinh area from storage facilities in the Hanoi and Thanh Hoa areas. Several days later on 22 September a major logistics unit in the Thanh Hoa area reportedly fulfilled its assigned transportation plan, despite damage to some roads caused by the flooding of the past month.

6. Further south in the area between Quang Khe and the DMZ, very limited information indicated that munitions and gasoline continued to move southward through Quang Binh Province. On 17 September a logistics unit near Quang Khe reportedly received 18 vehicles carrying ammunition from a unit near Vinh and, on the following day, [REDACTED] at least 525 tons of material remained in storage in Quang Binh Province. On 18 September, some 20 trucks were dispatched with gasoline from Quang Binh Province to a storage area along the western supply corridor in South Vietnam.

Laos and Cambodia

7. Logistics activity in the Laotian Panhandle was light this week, but we continued to receive evidence of impending large-scale supply movements. Recent analysis indicates that on 11 September at least 1,100 tons of unidentified merchandise were in storage in the vicinity of Route 99, one of the main north/south roads through the Panhandle. Five days later on 16 September, a logistics unit was planning to ship some 220 tons of POL to a storage area located near the Ban Karai Pass for future distribution. In other activity, logistics units continued their road building efforts and some units were noted transferring rice between storage areas. No shipments of ordnance, however, were detected moving in southern Laos this past week.

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8. NVA logistics units again shipped sizable quantities of rice, fuel and construction material through northern South Vietnam this past week, presumably for both civilian and military purposes. The only information received during the reporting period involving a sizable ammunition shipment came from a 13 September report which indicated that about 105 tons of ammunition had been loaded on trucks in northern Quang Tri Province during an unspecified time period. Possibly related to this was the sighting of 72 trucks along the northern portion of the Communists' new western supply corridor, also on 13 September.

9. Activity since that date has followed the normal recent pattern of trucks carrying either non-combat material or unidentified cargo. On 14 September, 54 vehicles carrying unidentified cargo travelled between storage areas along the western supply corridor. Four days later on 18 September, 26 vehicles carrying rice to Communist forces were detected moving along this corridor. On the same day, an NVA logistics unit in northern Quang Tri reportedly requested 25 vehicles to transport construction material needed for building a warehouse, reflecting the Communists' continuing concern with maintaining and improving their logistics network in this area as the rainy season approaches.

II. Communist-Initiated Combat Activity in South Vietnam and Laos

A. South Vietnam

10. In South Vietnam, the total number of communist-initiated ceasefire violations reported by the South Vietnamese Armed Forces since 27 January, 15 June, and for the last week (19-25 Sep) are shown below:

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Military Region	Total Since 27 January Ceasefire		Total Since 15 June Ceasefire		Last Week (19-25 Sep)	
	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor
MR 1	1,280	4,502	255	1,143	20	94
MR 2	503	3,422	239	1,568	23	109
MR 3	538	3,842	136	1,266	2	59
MR 4	1,021	9,248	343	3,082	27	205
Totals	3,342	21,014	973	7,059	72 (72)	467 (440) <u>1/</u>

1/ Denotes totals of previous week.

11. Some of these violations may have been initiated by GVN forces rather than communist forces, and it is impossible in all cases to determine the actual instigator. The table above and the charts on the following pages, however, do show fairly accurately the trend in the amount of combat that has occurred in South Vietnam since the ceasefire. The fact that a combat incident occurred at a particular time and place is generally reported accurately by the South Vietnamese, even though the question of who started it may not always be treated in objective fashion.

12. The most significant combat incident of the week occurred on 22 and 23 September, when North Vietnamese troops overran an ARVN battalion defending the border ranger camp at Plei Djereng. (Plei Djereng is located to the west of Pleiku town, about two-thirds of the way from Pleiku to the Cambodian border.) South Vietnamese Air Force pilots on reconnaissance missions after the battle reported that they saw eight NVA tanks on the airfield of the abandoned camp, and survivors have stated that tanks were used in the attack. This is the first time since the settlement agreement was signed last January that the Communists have employed armor in an offensive operation. The attack may have been in retaliation for recent ARVN

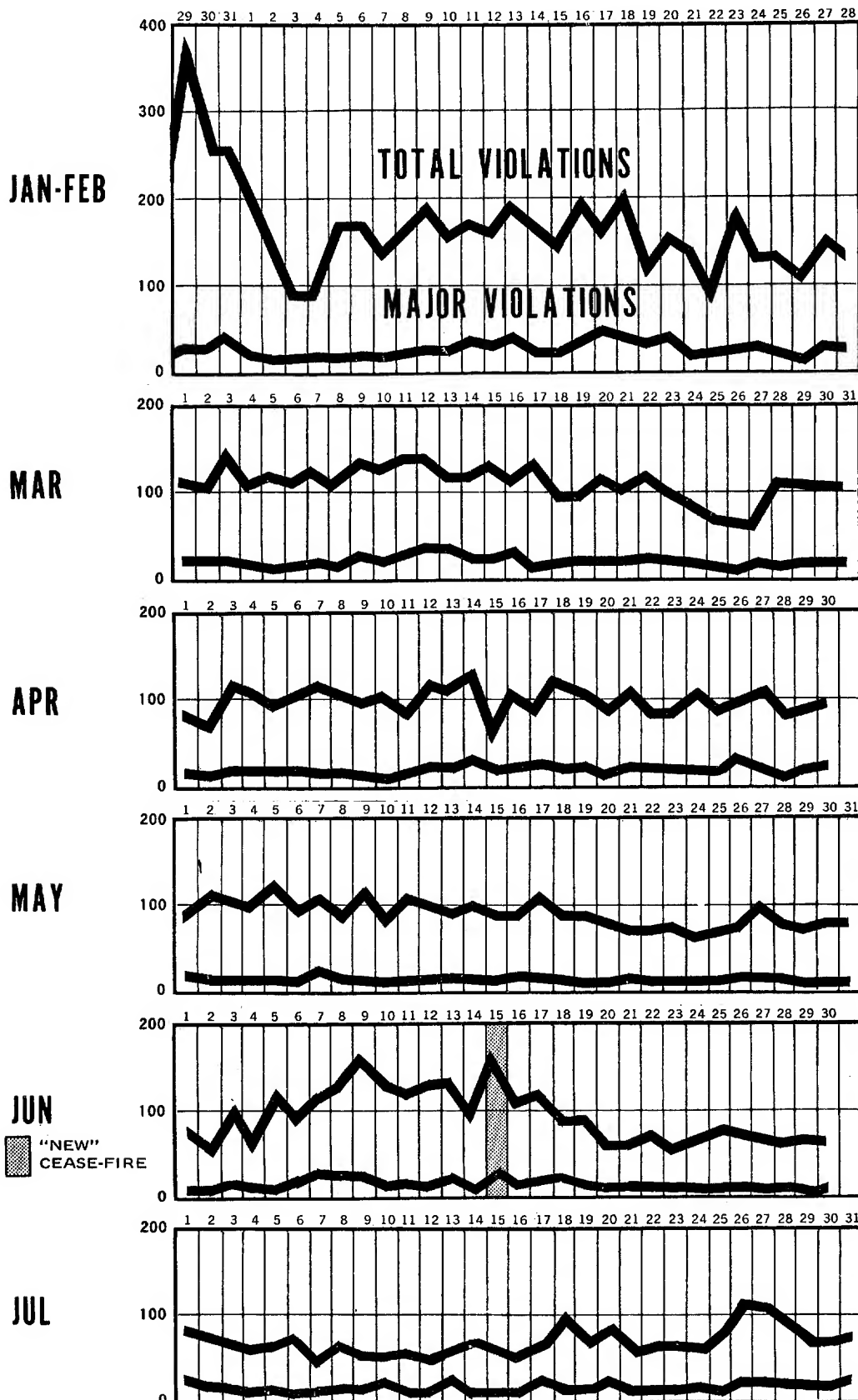
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CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AS REPORTED BY RVNAF

(28 JANUARY THROUGH 31 JULY 1973)

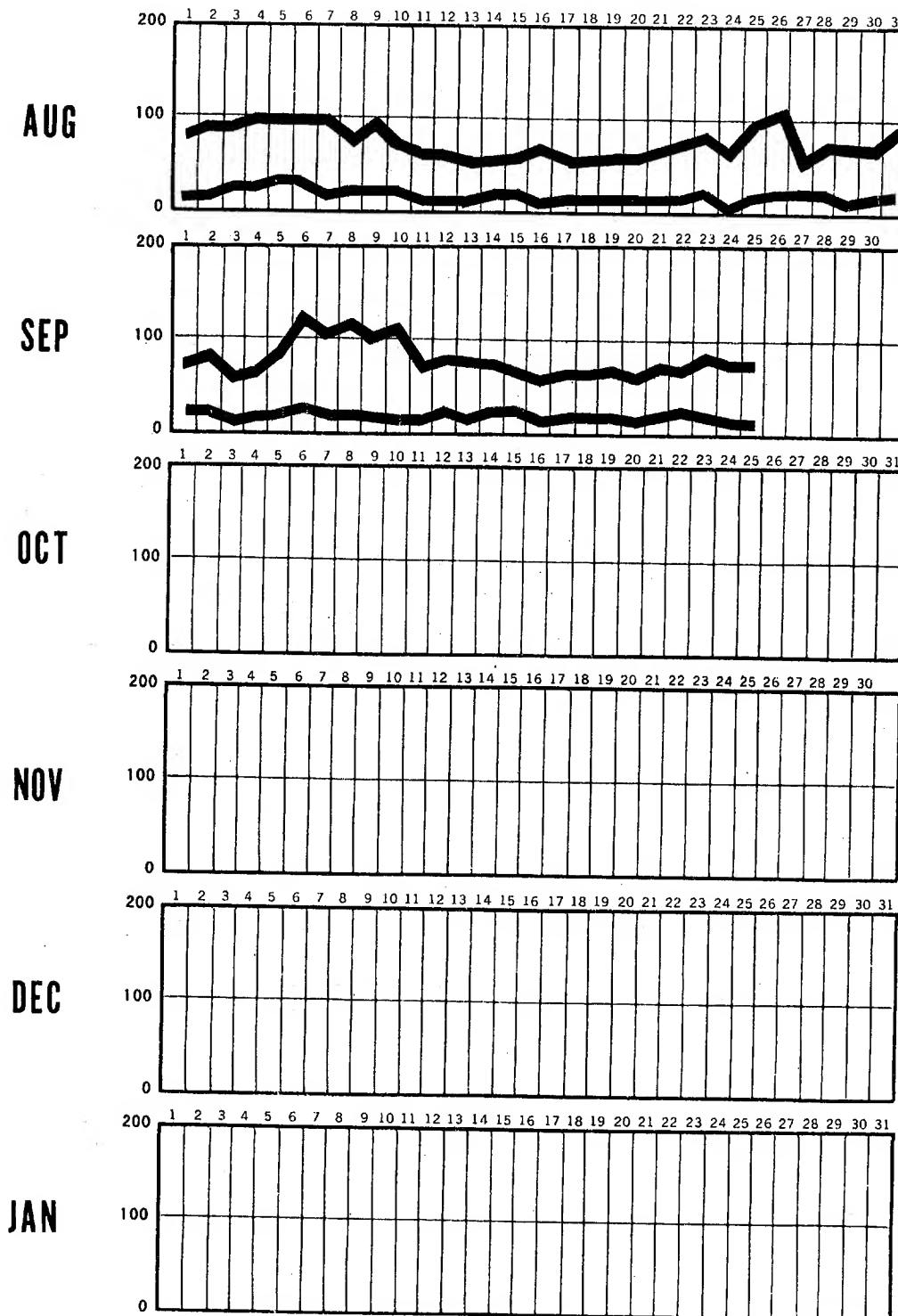


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CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AS REPORTED BY RVNAF

(1 AUGUST 1973 TO THE PRESENT)



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successes in the Trung Nghia area west of Kontum. The elimination of Plei Djereng as a GVN strong-point makes it easier for the North Vietnamese to protect their logistic corridor near the Cambodian border, and it would also strengthen Communist claims to territorial control in this area.

B. Laos

13. Military activity in Laos remained at a very low level during the past week. A small ground action did occur during the week in Military Region II of Laos which provoked retaliatory action by the Royal Lao Air Force. On 24 September, a 30 man Royal Lao Army unit about 10 miles east of Long Tieng was hit with 13 rounds of NVA 60 mm mortar fire. The attack caused no casualties, but in a fairly major act of retaliation government forces directed four T-28 air strikes against the North Vietnamese position.

III. Other Developments Affecting Communist Military Capabilities in Indochina

A. Large Stockpiles of Munitions in Southern North Vietnam

14. Hanoi is well along in its preparations for moving materiel southward during the 1973-74 dry season, which normally begins in October. Intercepted communications received during the past few months indicate that some 6,800 tons of munitions have been moved into storage areas north of the Demilitarized Zone since early July; another 1,300 tons of ordnance have been stockpiled near the Ban Karai Pass--a major entry way into southern Laos. The war materiel includes ammunition for almost every weapon in the Vietnamese Communists' arsenal. Taken together with the Communists' extensive road construction program this summer and the deployment of the NVA 32nd and 33rd Transportation Regiments from South Vietnam back into southern Laos, these stockpiles strongly suggest that the Communists will ship large quantities of supplies through the Laos

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Panhandle early this dry season. Although the NVA/VC already have large stocks of weapons and munitions on hand in the South, the munitions reflected in the recent messages by themselves would give the Communists a capability to sustain combat at levels as high as have ever occurred in South Vietnam for at least six months.

B. North Vietnamese to Expand Coastal Shipping in Quang Tri Province

15. Communist communications of 18 September indicate that North Vietnam intends to expand the cargo handling capacity of coastal shipping facilities in northern Quang Tri Province to handle a considerably higher level of shipping from the north. The intercepts record a North Vietnamese official's request for sufficient manpower and dock equipment to increase the cargo handling capacity in the Dong Ha/Cua Viet area up to "1,000 tons per day." We estimate that the present dock facilities in this area can handle an estimated 700 tons of cargo per day if used to capacity, although no more than one third of this capacity has been used by the Communists in any recent month.

16. Dong Ha, currently the only transshipment facility in South Vietnam used regularly for Communist seaborne supply deliveries, has handled a large part of the food and other supplies sent into northeastern Quang Tri Province since last March. Although the Communists apparently intend to resume large-scale resupply operations through Laos where the dry season is imminent, approaching rains in the coastal area of South Vietnam's MR-1 and the North Vietnamese Panhandle probably make seaborne supply delivery a more attractive means of resupplying this area. The rains also will raise water levels in coastal areas, enabling larger deep-water craft to use port facilities in the Cua Viet area.

C. Communists Move to Avert Rice Shortages in Southern South Vietnam

17. An increasing volume of evidence suggests that Communist forces in southern South Vietnam may

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face widespread rice shortages unless they are able to obtain large quantities of rice from the fall harvest in contested areas. [REDACTED]

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25X1C [REDACTED] COSVN is anticipating a struggle with the South Vietnamese over several key rice-growing areas--particularly those contested in the delta. To provide security for rice gatherers, COSVN has ordered the deployment of combat units along the perimeter of these areas, instructing them to "fight with the enemy over each grain of rice."

18. More recent evidence indicates that rice is already becoming scarce in some areas held by the Communists. COSVN officials have complained that since June the Khmer Communists--who are also suffering shortages--have reduced the flow to South Vietnam of Cambodian-grown rice. Moreover, crops grown on newly cultivated land under Communist control in southern South Vietnam apparently have not met expectations. Although the Communists are still able to purchase large quantities of food from local markets in South Vietnam, efforts by the South Vietnamese government to prevent such activity reportedly are beginning to have some effect.

19. The most pressing problem for the NVA/VC is in northern MR-3, where the Communists must feed three infantry divisions. To meet shortages in this area, the Communists have begun to transport rice northward from MR-4. COSVN is also urging increased agricultural production in Communist-controlled areas to prevent the rice shortage from growing more serious. Underscoring the emphasis on increasing local production, COSVN has ordered more units to become self-sufficient and has instructed rear services personnel to enlarge their rice stockpiles.

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ANNEX A

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Paragraphs 10 through 13: These paragraphs, which list reports of Communist-initiated fighting inside South Vietnam and Laos in violation of



In the case of South Vietnam, they are almost exclusively derived from reporting of the South Vietnamese armed forces and may be subject to the biases inherent in RVNAF reporting at the present time. In the case of Laos, most of the reporting on combat violations comes from Laos Government commanders who pass the information to American officials at the Military Region Headquarters level. In any case, there is no particular security problem associated with using the information in these paragraphs in discussions with the North Vietnamese.

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ANNEX B

Post-Ceasefire Infiltration of North Vietnamese
Personnel to the South

1. During the past week, the first indications were received that Hanoi was planning to resume significant infiltration of combat troops to the south. On 18 September, Binh Tram (BT) 8*--which operates in the Vinh area of North Vietnam--instructed its commo-liaison stations to be ready to receive one infiltration group per night, beginning on 19 September. Although this message did not specify the time frame during which the groups were to move, forecasts of impending infiltration through a particular binh tram in the past usually have covered a period of one or two weeks. The last regular combat group to be detected entering the pipeline in North Vietnam left Vinh in mid-July.

2. The first conclusive evidence that the North Vietnamese had actually begun to move new combat troops southward was received on 22 September, with the initial detection of Group 1069 at BT 8. This group, which has a strength nearly 550 troops, is traveling to the central coast of South Vietnam (Viet Cong MR-5). Because most Communist combat units in this area still are believed to be below full strength, a flow of combat infiltration to VC MR-5 would signify that Hanoi intends to bring its present units there up to strength. During the past week, references from the Laotian Panhandle to Groups 1066 and 1067 also appeared in intercepted messages; these groups probably started south from North Vietnam within the past few weeks. As a result of these detections, we also believe that Group 1068, which we have not yet observed in communications intelligence, probably departed North Vietnam for VC MR-5 undetected during September.

* Until recently, Binh Tram 8 was designated Binh Tram 18.

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3. On 23 September, Group 4020--destined for Communist MR Tri-Thien-Hue in northern MR-1--was detected moving through BT 8. This group, which communications intelligence indicates has a strength of 660 troops, may have been sent south to provide replacements for the NVA 325th Division, which reportedly has suffered casualties in recent actions against South Vietnamese forces. The designation of Group 4020 suggests that three other 4xxx series groups (4017, 4018 and 4019) have recently infiltrated into this area undetected. Because of the lack of data on their specific date of departure and the current upsurge in infiltration starts, these groups have been assigned a starting date of early September. (The last detected group in this series--Group 4016--was observed in the Vinh area in late May.)

4. The third and fourth regular combat groups initially observed in North Vietnam during the past week were Groups 5075 and 5076, which moved through BT 8 on 24 and 25 September. Both groups had strengths of over 585 troops and are destined for southern Laos/MR-559. Another new 5xxx series group--5064--was reported farther south in the system on 21 September in a message to BT 52, which operates along Route 19 in eastern Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia, into Pleiku Province, South Vietnam. Although the geographic destination of this group--which probably has about 500 men--is unclear, it appears destined for either northeastern Cambodia or South Vietnam. Because of the unusually large number of undetected "gap" groups between Groups 5064 and 5075, however, they will not be added to our estimate of starts pending final verification of 5075 and 5076. (Since the last previously identified group number detected in the 5xxx series, however, was 5062, we have gap-filled Group 5063--with an estimated strength of 500 men--and included it in our estimates.)

5. In addition to these southward-moving groups, regular Group 9037--apparently destined for northern Laos--was detected in the BT 8 area on 19 September. The group reportedly has a strength

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of 531 combat personnel. One small group (Y460) comprised of seven specialists also was detected at BT 8 on 23 September. This group is traveling to MR Tri-Thien-Hue. Table 1 below summarizes infiltration starts of North Vietnamese personnel, including specialists, since 1 January 1973, while Table 2 compares infiltration starts of combat troops to the various southern war zones since 1 September 1973 with those between 1 and 25 September 1972.

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Table 1

Number of Personnel Entering the Pipeline
Destined for South Vietnam, Southern
Laos, and Cambodia Since 1 January 1973

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Special-Purpose</u>
January	20,000	1,600
February	10,200	2,100
March	3,250	2,250
April	1,925	1,200
May	7,175	300
June	2,200	700
July	3,650	600
August	2,200	700
September 1-25	6,050	50

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Table 2

Comparative Infiltration Starts of Combat
Troops from North Vietnam, By Destination
1-25 September*

	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>
Total	<u>4,000</u>	<u>6,000</u>
MR Tri-Thien-Hue	2,500	2,000
MR-5	1,500	2,000
B-3 Front	0	0
COSVN	0	0
Southern Laos/MR 559	0	2,000

* This table covers the infiltration of North Vietnamese troops to South Vietnam, Cambodia, and southern Laos. Infiltrators moving to northern Laos are not included.

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